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COUNTY MANAGER

## Welcome

Volusia County was tested like never before in 2020. While navigating the impacts of the global health crisis, the Volusia County Council and county staff worked tirelessly last year to address the challenges of COVID-19 and position the community to not only recover, but come back more resilient than ever. Policy decisions and safety measures were enacted, funding was allocated, partnerships were forged and response plans were put into action. The efforts included everything from food distribution and dispersal of personal protective equipment to vulnerable populations, to the granting of millions of dollars in financial help for rent and mortgage assistance and aid to local businesses and nonprofit agencies impacted by the pandemic. One thing about emergencies: They have a way of bringing us together and bringing out the best in people. Working in conjunction with local, state and federal partners, elected leaders, healthcare workers, first responders and emergency management teams, Volusia County continues to take a proactive role in serving the public, meeting needs and keeping the community safe. While we're not back to normal yet, the combined efforts of all of our partners have helped to put our community on a positive path to a brighter and stronger future.

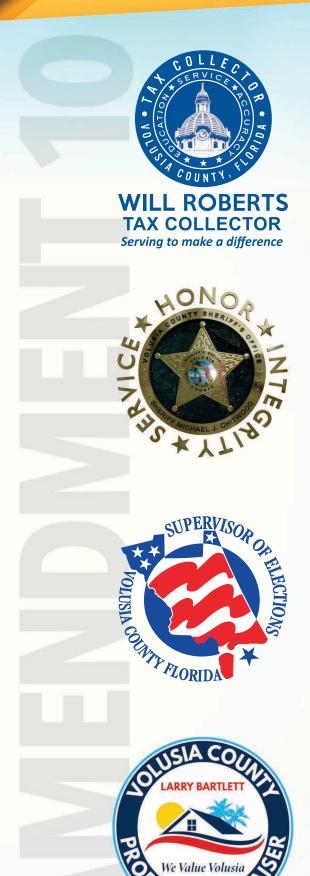
While the county's COVID-19 response was a major focus, the regular business of county government continued on and many other things were accomplished in 2020 for our residents. For instance, key transportation, parks, trails and water improvement projects got under way, the new Tom Staed Veterans Memorial Bridge opened, planning progressed on several beach ramp upgrades and Daytona Beach International Airport underwent a major facelift. You can read about these and other 2020 milestones in the pages that follow.



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## **Amendment 10**

While the Constitutional ballot initiative was titled "State and Local Government Structure and Operation," it's more commonly known as Amendment 10, and was approved by Florida voters in November 2018. Amendment 10 led to a major restructuring of government.

Amendment 10 led to the conversion of the Property Appraiser, Sheriff and Supervisor of Elections from county charter officers as part of county government, to county constitutional officers as separate employers. Amendment 10 also restored the Tax Collector – an office that had been abolished 50 years ago by the county's home rule charter when its duties were absorbed by the County's Finance Department. Will Roberts was elected Tax Collector and took office on January 5, 2021.

The County spent much of 2019 and 2020 paving the way for implementation of Amendment 10, assembling a transition team that collaborated with Property Appraiser Larry Bartlett, Sheriff Mike Chitwood and Supervisor of Elections Lisa Lewis – the three other elected officers impacted by the changes. Agreements were developed with all three officers and approved by the County Council. Each agreement laid out the transfer of operations and structural changes that would take place in their offices. A similar agreement also was approved for the Tax Collector's Office. The agreements led to a smooth and orderly transition while seeking to mitigate costs associated with the changes.

In October, the County Council put another key piece of the transition in place with adoption of a FY 2020-21 budget that realigned the Sheriff's Office, Elections Office, Property Appraiser's Office and the new Office of Tax Collector and set them up for an orderly transition to Constitutional status. Amendment 10 took effect on Jan. 5, at which time the Tax Collector's Office assumed responsibility for property taxes and tag and title.

# **Constitutional Officers**

### **Larry Bartlett, Property Appraiser**

2020 was a challenging year. The Volusia County Property Appraiser's Office adapted, along with the rest of county government, to the new requirements and restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Leveraging technology has allowed us to provide new online services, improved property search capabilities, multilanguage functionality, and adaptive design to our website.

Homestead Exemption fraud has cost Volusia County millions of dollars in tax base revenue over the past 20 years. Back tax liens on the property of taxpayers improperly receiving multiple Homestead Exemptions are now being enforced. We expect to collect millions of dollars for the county general fund over the next few months. In 2020, the Exemption Compliance Division collected \$2,012,781 in wrongfully claimed exemptions and returned \$26,543,800 in total taxable property to the tax roll. Volusia County property values continued to experience steady growth, and the residential market continues to surge despite the pandemic.

### **Sheriff Mike Chitwood**

In 2020, the evolving threat of a pandemic seemed to change everything. But it didn't change the mission of the Sheriff's Office. Volusia County's crime rate continued to fall, and case clearance rates once again outpaced the national average. Deputies, detectives, dispatchers and support staff made that possible, in part by expanding the use of technology like license plate readers and by sharing criminal intelligence countywide through the Volusia County Crime Center. Advancements in technology also improved deputy safety, with the Sheriff's Office's Aerial Response Team building a state-of-the-art drone program to provide deputies a bird's-eye view of potentially volatile situations. Several proactive narcotics operations took large amounts of drugs and weapons off the street. The Sheriff launched new initiatives in training, recruiting, and law enforcement services – including a pilot program to make mental health counseling resources available faster on certain calls. The Sheriff's Office ended 2020 preparing for the transition to a constitutional office in 2021, with Sheriff Chitwood becoming Volusia County's first constitutional sheriff in the half-century since the county charter was enacted.

### **Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections**

What can we say about 2020. The Department of Elections survived another Presidential election cycle. With the pandemic upon us, we worked diligently to provide Volusia County citizens with a safe environment to cast their ballot at their local precinct on Election Day. We appreciated Volusia County Schools for providing their schools as polling sites to enable social distancing. We saw an unprecedented increase in vote-by-mail ballots. Volusia County had a 77.62% turnout for the General Election, with 83% of those votes cast before Election Day through vote-by-mail ballots or early voting. 2021 will be a busy year, as we will be working on redistricting. Every 10 years after the Census numbers come in, voting boundaries are redrawn to incorporate changes in population. We will be working with officials at the congressional, state, county and municipal level to produce new boundaries.



**Larry Bartlett** 



Mike Chitwood



Lisa Lewis

# **Constitutional Officers**

**Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections** (continued from page 6)

In addition, our office will continue to follow CDC guidelines as we prepare and conduct elections. Cybersecurity will continue in the forefront of everyone's mind, especially in the elections community. As always, we will strive to continue providing open, secure and transparent elections to the people of Volusia County.

### Will Roberts, Tax Collector

For the first time in 50 years, Volusia County voters elected a Tax Collector. In January, the county transferred tax collection functions, vehicle tag and title services and hunting and fishing licenses from the Volusia County Revenue Department to the Tax Collector. Our office is committed to collaborating with the county through sharing services in IT, HR, facilities and more. Our mission is to provide excellent customer service, accuracy and education to the taxpayers, citizens and residents of Volusia County. The Tax Collector's Office will be looking to transition additional services to the Office in 2021. The team is currently working with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to take over all Volusia County driver's license services by early 2022— a significant undertaking. The Tax Collector's office is also working with the state Department of Health to issue birth certificates and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to start offering concealed weapons permits in the county.



Will Roberts

### Laura Roth, Clerk of the Circuit Court

The Clerk of the Circuit Court maintains important documents and provides services such as marriage licenses, official land records, passport processing, domestic violence injunction assistance, child support services, foreclosure and tax deed land sales, traffic citation processing, maintenance of all official court records, and extensive free public records accessibility via clerk.org. The clerk is offering Property Fraud Alert, a free, easy-to-use service to protect residents from land records fraud. Sign up for this free service at www.clerk.org. In 2020, the clerk's office provided continuous essential services to the community during the COVID-19 closures through the walk-up window at the DeLand Courthouse. Residents were able to obtain domestic violence injunctions, record notices of commencement and obtain marriage licenses among other services in Volusia County uninterrupted. Visit www.clerk.org and follow our official Facebook page for more information about future Operation Green Light events, special group weddings and other free programs.



Laura Roth





















# **COVID-19:** Volusia County responds

On March 1, 2020, Florida announced its first case of COVID. It was all so new that no one knew what to expect or how bad it would get. Six days later, on March 7, the pandemic reached Volusia County with its first announced case. Very quickly, face masks and gloves became common safety accessories. Social distancing became the order of the day. Soon, other terms like cluster, spike, flattening the curve and contact tracing would become an everyday part of our vocabulary. Still, there were far more questions than answers about this new health crisis.

The answers would come later. But there was no time to wait – or waste. Policy decisions had to be made. Response plans needed to be developed. Supply chains and distribution networks needed to be organized. Testing sites needed to be established. The community needed protection and the community needed help. In the face of an emerging crisis, residents needed swift and decisive leadership.

### **Part I: Containment**

Temporarily closing county administrative buildings, shutting down libraries, playgrounds, campgrounds and educational attractions, restricting driving on the beach to prevent crowds – these were really painful decisions. Painful, but necessary first steps in containing the virus, controlling the spread and protecting the health, safety and welfare of our residents and employees. The Emergency Operations Center was ramped up, emergency response plans were activated and an unprecedented level of coordination with health facilities and municipal, regional, state and federal partners was triggered to help plot out a strategy to combat this new threat. While government offices closed temporarily, county employees stepped up and found new and innovative ways to continue on with the business of serving the public without interruption. Volusia County employees truly embody the spirit of service, and this new challenge required every ounce of their resourcefulness, imagination and creativity. And in many instances, it meant a transition to virtual programs and services in areas like libraries, the Marine Science Center, Lyonia Environmental Center and DeBary Hall. For the time being, this was our new normal. This was our first step on the road to recovery.

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# **COVID-19:** Volusia County responds

### Part II: Reopening

Reopening was incredibly vital to local residents and families, to our businesses, institutions of government and houses of worship, to our economic wellbeing and perhaps most importantly, to our community spirit. While we had to get this right, it wasn't as simple as flipping a switch, turning on the lights and re-opening the doors. With our County Council leading the way, the reopening was thoughtful, measured and strategic. It involved enhanced cleaning procedures and lots of safety retrofits – things like sanitizing stations, new disinfecting air handlers, Plexiglas partitions and restroom door pullers. But most of all, it required a plan – what we call Relaunch Volusia. This is a highly detailed document that lays out mitigation strategies and reopening plans and action items for every division in county government. Then, one by one, when the time was right – and with a lot of planning and coordination – administrative centers, libraries, beach vehicle ramps and county-operated playgrounds and campsites opened back up. To be successful, the reopening required expanded COVID testing and a huge amount of communication with the public to let them know what to expect and what they could do to stay safe and help contain the virus. Testing sites were spun up around the county. Weekly news conferences and live panel discussions were initiated. And agencies around the county teamed up to launch a wash up, back up, mask up public awareness campaign while awaiting the arrival of a vaccine. After all, we're all in this together.

### Part III: Help Is Here

Because of the County Council's leadership, the county has been able to put more than \$9.3 million in coronavirus relief funds on the street and directly into our business community. For many small businesses, non-profit agencies and homebased businesses, the county's COVID-19 grant programs have been an absolute lifeline. These are real people and real jobs that we've been able to help support and stabilize. The county also has lent a helping hand with more than \$19.4 million in rental and mortgage assistance delivered to the community to help offset the pandemic's financial impact. And with Public Protection providing the logistics and staffing, the Ocean Center served as a central hub for the coordination of a massive effort to distribute needed personal protective equipment into the community to help businesses either stay open or reopen - and do it safely for the protection of their employees and customers. Hundreds of thousands of face masks have also been distributed throughout the community.

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# **COVID-19:** Volusia County responds

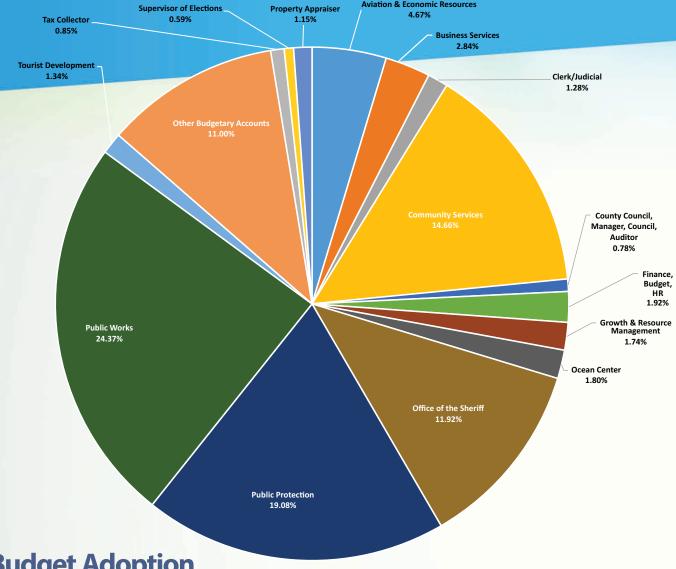
In addition, the county has partnered with Halifax Urban Ministries in conjunction with other participating agencies to distribute more than 92,000 bags of food to Volusia County families. And once again, the Ocean Center served as the central distribution hub for the massive distribution effort. When it comes to COVID recovery and relief efforts, it really has been all hands on deck!

### **Part IV: Recovery**

We're not back to normal yet. But there's no doubt that the county's efforts have helped to put our community on a positive path forward. We see it every day, in a return of our businesses, our government, our educational institutions and in the durability of our families. To be sure, there still are plenty of struggles. For many, the county has been there to lend a needed hand up. While the needs have been great, our collective resolve has been even greater. Resilience is no longer just a vague term or abstract concept. It represents hope and strength. It's a way of life and our roadmap to continued recovery. None of us knows how long COVID will be around. But because of our dedicated, professional and caring employees and partner agencies, Volusia County is positioned to continue meeting the challenges, providing quality services, filling needs and keeping our community safe. It's what makes us Volusia Proud, Volusia Strong!



# Operating Budget by Department \$821,071,829



**Budget Adoption** 

In the best of times, the annual process for establishing funding levels, tax rates and service priorities is a challenging balancing act that must weigh what residents want and need against available revenue. But with its two extraordinary events – one anticipated and the other an unwelcome blow that no one could have predicted – 2020 was anything but business as usual. In addition to their other impacts, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the major governmental restructuring prompted by Amendment 10 created unparalleled challenges for the FY 2020-21 budget process. But in the end, the Volusia County Council and county staff worked in tandem to overcome the challenges and produce a responsible and fiscally prudent budget that holds the line on taxes and is responsive to the needs of the community. And thanks to the agreements that were put in place in 2020, the new budget realigned the Sheriff's Office, Elections Office, Property Appraiser's Office and the new Office of Tax Collector and set them up for a smooth and orderly transition to Constitutional status as envisioned by the voters when they approved Amendment 10. The overall operating budget totals \$821.1 million, which includes the \$311.3 million General Fund, which finances countywide services. The County budget is financed in part by 10 different taxing funds. While funding essential services, this year's budget also resulted in some welcome tax relief for Volusia County residents. For the first time in memory, 9 of the 10 tax funds were brought in at or below the rolled-back rate, with the 10th fund partially rolled back.

Some fiscal challenges undoubtedly lay ahead for the County. But by any measure and any metric, the FY 2020-21 budget adopted by the County Council is a prudent and conservative spending and tax plan that will serve our county, our residents and our economy well in the current year and positions county government to meet future challenges.













# Fiscal Accountability & Transparency

Transparency, accountability and a strong set of internal controls and checks and balances are essential to any financial system. That's why the County Council revived the county's department of internal auditing in 2018. The position was filled in late 2019, and the auditor put in his first full year of work in 2020 – which included five detailed audits covering the ECHO and Volusia Forever programs as well as the county's three tourism advertising authorities – the Halifax Area Advertising Authority, Southeast Volusia Advertising Authority and the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority. The audits are designed to ensure that county programs are operating efficiently, effectively and in compliance with their guiding laws, rules and regulations. The audits contained a number of recommendations to strengthen procedures, but overall found no serious problems.

The work continues in 2021, with audits of Votran and the county's cybersecurity measures in progress. Additionally, the County Council recently approved the audit plan for this year, which includes audits of purchasing, purchasing cards and vendor management; economic development incentives; construction projects; airport construction grants; and corrections facility operations.



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# **Quality of Life**

A livable community is a safe, pleasant and cohesive place. And it's a place where quality of life is valued and protected. Factors that determine a community's quality of life include such things as respect for the environment, access to transportation options and the availability of cultural amenities and parks, trails and other recreational facilities. Volusia County took many steps in 2020 to enhance our community's quality of life.

With millions of dollars of federal funding on the line, Volusia County Government took a proactive role in helping to ensure a complete and accurate count in the **2020 Census**.

Volusia County Council members **Barb Girtman** and **Billie Wheeler** co-chaired the Complete Count Committee, which included dozens of community leaders from across the county. County staff implemented an ambitious marketing and communications plan, while individual cities and agencies reached out to residents with a common message – Make sure you count!

Despite disruptions and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Volusia County managed to increase its self-response rate from 62.8% in 2010 to 66.5% in 2020. And according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the door-to-door campaign brought the county's total response rate close to 100%.

The U.S. Census Bureau honored Volusia County's efforts in its "2020 Census Best Practices Showcase," recognizing the Complete Count Committee's marketing and communications efforts, along with the friendly competition among municipalities.

Much to the delight of area children, Volusia County opened a playground behind **Hope Place Public Library** in Daytona Beach on Feb. 14, 2020. The playground serves the neighborhood, library patrons and Hope Place clients. Features include a covered play area, swing set, two basketball courts, picnic tables, and plenty of room to run. The \$480,000 project was funded by local impact fees.

The year 2020 also saw the start of construction on **Lemon Bluff Park** in Osteen, a new recreation facility with direct access to the St. Johns River.

The park will include a new boat launch, two floating docks to accommodate launching canoes and kayaks, a fishing area, restrooms, sidewalks, privacy barriers, two pavilions and added parking. The work got under way after the County Council awarded a \$2 million construction contract in June.

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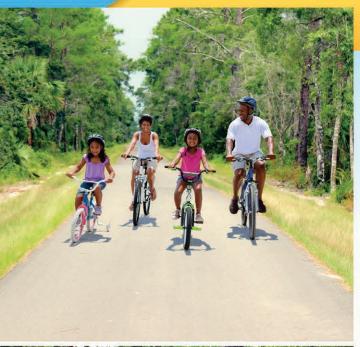






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# **Quality of Life**

Funds for the Lemon Bluff Park project are coming from a variety of sources, including grants from the Volusia County ECHO program, the Florida Inland Navigation District, the Florida Boating Improvement Program and impact fees.

The county's popular **trails system** provided a needed outlet during the pandemic - attracting historic levels of users who came outside to recreate, exercise and enjoy quality family experiences. And the trails system is growing with last year's approval of construction contracts for projects in DeLand, DeLeon Springs and DeBary. The new trail segment in the DeLeon Springs area, about 1.2 miles in length, extends the existing Spring-to-Spring Trail which previously terminated at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Baxter Street along Baxter Street and Ponce Deleon Springs Boulevard to DeLeon Springs State Park. This project also included an extension of the trail through the woods to Spring Garden Avenue's intersection with U.S. Highway 17. Down in DeBary, a segment of Spring-To-Spring Trail, construction began on a 2.9-mile segment that will link two existing trail sections filling the gap between Rob Sullivan Park on Highbanks Road and the intersection of U.S. Highway 17-92 and Benson Junction Road.

Design for two new trail segments filling in the final gap between Lake Beresford Park in DeLand got underway as well. Once these segments are constructed, these projects will complete the Spring-To-Spring Trail, ultimately connecting Gemini Spring Park to DeLeon Spring State Park.

And despite a pandemic, **Votran**, the county's public transportation service, continued to serve the community. By the end of 2020, Votran had provided nearly 2.7 million rides throughout its fleet of services. To help slow the spread of the virus, Votran handed out more than 260,000 masks, placed hand sanitizer stations at the front and rear doors of buses and performed extensive daily cleaning of facilities and vehicles.

The team's dedication and professionalism did not go unnoticed. Hometown News recognized Votran as a Hometown Hero honoree in the First Responders and Essential Workers category. Twenty drivers also received the 2020 Award of the Year by the National Safety Council. Award criteria includes a minimum of 15 years or 250,000 consecutive miles driven without a preventable collision.

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# BY THE NUMBERS







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15,000 Over 15,000 COVID-19 vaccines administered

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# **A Safe Community**

Protecting people and property is our number one priority. Whether it's fire protection, medical services or emergency preparedness and disaster response, ensuring the public's safety is essential to building a vibrant and cohesive community. Thanks to the actions of the County Council and county staff, a number of public safety enhancements were implemented in 2020.

Fire Services received a 75-foot ladder truck for the Bethune Beach response district and the Station 23 (Turnbull) fire rescue/EMS service center became operational with a new administrative and living quarters facility for fire and EMS personnel. Additionally, 140 self-contained breathing apparatus were added on all front-line fire trucks. Meanwhile, the **Emergency Medical** Services (EMS) Division took delivery of and deployed 28 Lucas 3 mechanical CPR devices, began upgrading all current stretchers with Stryker Power Assist and Power Load systems and also received seven new ambulances that replaced older units in the fleet. Emergency Management earned reaccreditation by the **Emergency** Management Accreditation Program, which evaluated the county's ability to effectively bring together personnel, resources and communications from a variety of agencies and organizations for disaster preparations and response. And to better serve the community during emergencies, in December the Public Works division moved to a new, centrally-located facility constructed to withstand hurricane force winds, allowing staff to remain at the location during extreme weather events.

While the 2020 hurricane season was a busy one, Volusia County managed to get through the year largely unscathed. One storm, though, was a close call. However, the county was prepared, working in advance of hurricane season to formulate plans and procedures that addressed the new challenges of facing a hurricane during a pandemic. As the storm grew closer and the possibility of impact near Volusia County became more likely, preparations began. Volusia County Emergency Management coordinated with partners on the local, state and federal level, and the county and cities got to work distributing sandbags. The emergency operations center was activated, with virtual communication where possible.

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# **A Safe Community**

A dedicated microsite on **Volusia.org** was launched and social media messaging was posted to ensure residents were informed and prepared. In an abundance of caution, the county coordinated with Volusia County Schools to open shelters, with new COVID-19 protocols in place.

Thankfully, **Isaias' path** veered farther off the east coast as it approached Florida, alleviating impacts to the county. Ultimately, the storm passed by with very little effect on the county, but it was a good test of Volusia County's readiness to manage a storm event in the midst of a pandemic.

Hurricane season wasn't the only hazard the county faced in 2020. At approximately 3:48 p.m. on Aug. 18, an **EF-2 tornado** tore through DeLand, leaving almost 5 miles of destruction in its wake. At its widest, the tornado spanned 550 yards.

Multiple **Volusia County divisions** immediately responded to the scene, along with the Volusia Sherriff's Office, the City of DeLand and other public agencies. Volusia County Road and Bridge crews first worked alongside Duke Power crews to clear roadways and restore access to streets before taking on the monumental task of collecting and discarding of debris.

Along with county and city entities, multiple volunteer agencies stepped in to assist, including The American Red Cross, Florida Baptist Convention, Team Rubicon, Volusia Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) and the United Way of Volusia and Flagler Counties.

The Volusia County Property Appraiser's Office's damage assessment report identified more than \$8 million in damage, with more than half in unincorporated Volusia County. Thankfully, there was no loss of life.

Meanwhile, pets and people got added protection in 2020, thanks to a growing partnership between **Volusia County Animal Services** and our local cities.

For local governments and the citizens they serve, sharing resources makes good sense – and cents. Volusia County embraced that common-sense philosophy in a big way last year, inking inter-local agreements with eight local cities for the sharing of animal services.



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Volusia County Animal Services is dedicated to enforcing laws pertaining to animals, providing programs to promote responsible pet ownership and investigating abuse, cruelty or neglect involving animals. But before the agreements, Animal Services had no authority to operate outside of the unincorporated areas of the county. Not anymore. For the cities of Daytona Beach, Daytona Beach Shores, Deltona, Holly Hill, New Smyrna Beach, Pierson, Ponce Inlet and Port Orange, help from the county to deal with animal issues is just a phone call away. The agreements are all about the cities and county working together and sharing resources in order to provide the best and most efficient services possible without regard to jurisdictional boundaries.

Under the agreements, the cities retain jurisdiction over animal services within their boundaries. But if they encounter a situation where additional resources are needed or city personnel aren't available – situations such as animal fighting, dangerous dogs, seizure or impoundment of animals, a criminal investigation involving animals or an animal search and rescue operation – the agreements allow the cities to ask for the county's help.

And the agreements work both ways, allowing the county to ask participating cities for help if needed. That will be particularly useful during declared emergencies when Volusia County Animal Services could always use additional resources to establish and staff pet and pet-friendly shelters.

The agreements not only represent an efficient way to address issues across borders, but they're good news for people and pets alike!





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# Preserving our quality of life









# **Protecting Natural Resources**

Many of our natural resources are in limited supply, and their protection is essential for maintaining Volusia County's quality of life. Conservation, protection and preservation aren't buzzwords, but rather guiding principles ingrained into all of our processes and procedures and our programs and services. From land preservation and renewal of the **ECHO** and **Volusia Forever** programs to protecting rivers, springs and lakes and cleansing stormwater runoff, the county significantly advanced the cause of natural resource preservation in 2020.

Created in 2000, the ECHO and Volusia Forever programs sprung up out of a grassroots effort by local residents determined to help preserve environmentally sensitive lands and enhance environmental, cultural, historic and outdoor recreational facilities in Volusia County. Together, the two programs have been responsible for the preservation of more than 38,000 acres of land for the public's enjoyment as well as more than 240 projects in support of parks, playgrounds, ballfields, multi-use trails, museums, theaters, cultural and arts centers and restoration efforts all around the county.

Last year, the County Council awarded approximately \$3.1 million in ECHO grants to help fund a variety of projects, such as basketball courts, an outdoor fitness center, lights for tennis courts, playground equipment, two parks and a pickleball complex. ECHO and Volusia Forever are financed by small property tax rates – a maximum of 1/5 of a mill per-year for each program. Volusia County residents obviously felt like they got a good return on their investment. Because on November 3rd, by a more than 70 percent margin, voters approved the extension of both programs and the taxes that fund them. Thanks to the voters, both programs have been given another 20 years to help preserve Volusia County's legacy as a trendsetter for the preservation of environmentally sensitive and water resource protection land as well as the development and protection of environmental, cultural, historic and outdoor recreational facilities. The County Council will be developing implementing language this year to guide ECHO and Volusia Forever through the year 2041.

Pictured: DeBary Hall, Shell Harbor boat ramp, Deep Creek Preserve



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# **Protecting Natural Resources**

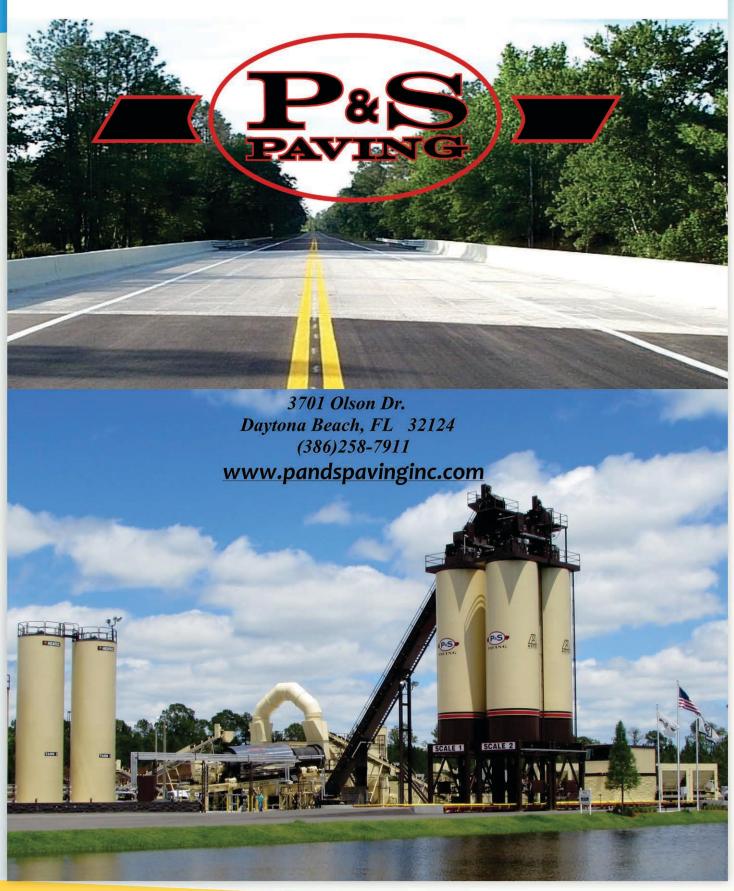
Our springs, rivers and lakes are vital to a healthy environment, tourism, a vibrant economy, residents and visitors. In fact, water is our most precious natural resource and one of life's basic building blocks, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that water got a lot of attention in 2020 from the County Council and county staff – specifically, how to improve it, preserve it, protect it and conserve it. Six projects moved forward in the last year that will have long-term benefits for Volusia County, all designed to reduce the amount of harmful pollutants that end up in our water bodies.

In February of last year, the County Council authorized engineering and design work on a septic tank conversion project in Oak Hill. The sanitary sewer system planned for the Indian Harbor Estates community is expected to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous pollutants flowing into the **Mosquito Lagoon** while providing approximately 280 homeowners with a centralized wastewater collection system.

In April, the Council awarded a \$5.7 million construction management contract for a project that centers on construction of a new pipeline to redirect wastewater from the county's wastewater treatment plant in Deltona to its **water reclamation facility** in DeBary. The project will provide a higher level of treatment and result in the consolidation of treatment plants in Southwest Volusia from three to one. The net effect will be a significant reduction of pollutants in the 130-square-mile Blue Spring springshed.

In May, the County Council inked a \$2.5 million agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection that will help pay for the construction of central sewer lines along the U.S. **Highway 17 corridor** into the core business district of DeLeon Springs. The 3-mile utility extension project, providing both central sewer and water service, is considered a critical step in protecting the delicate spring basin while also promoting business growth and opportunities.

# Paving the Way to a Better Tomorrow....









# **Protecting Natural Resources**

In October, two water improvement projects moved forward when the county landed state grants to help pay for new stormwater systems impacting the **Mosquito Lagoon** on the east side of the county and **Lake Beresford** on the west side of the county. Both projects will result in a higher level of treatment of stormwater that discharges into the two water bodies. Also last year, the Sparton company in DeLeon Springs built a brand new onsite wastewater treatment system with funds from a county water quality infrastructure grant. The new treatment system is more environmentally friendly to the sensitive spring's watershed.

Despite ongoing initiatives, our springs, rivers and lakes are still at risk and, in some cases, already suffering the effects of pollution. Blue Spring, a popular haven for humans and manatees, is of particular concern. This centerpiece of **Blue Spring State Park** flows to the St. Johns River from the aquifer, which provides drinking water for Volusia County residents.

To let residents know how they can help protect this vital commodity, Volusia County and West Volusia's cities have launched a public awareness campaign titled "Time to Change the Way We Go."

The campaign focuses on the issues the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has identified as the top contributors to pollution in the Blue Spring springshed:

· Septic tanks: 54%

· Residential fertilizers: 22%

· Wastewater treatment facilities: 8%

Atmospheric pollution: 5%

· Sports turfgrass fertilizer: 4%

· Wastewater treatment reuse: 4%

· Farm fertilizer: 2%

· Livestock waste: 0.8%

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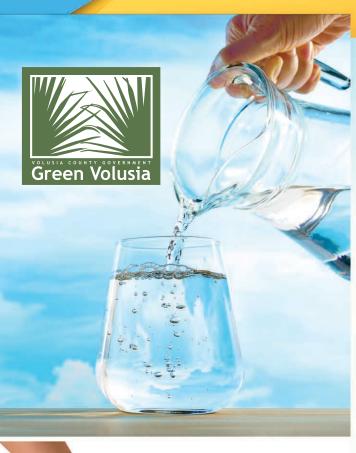


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# **Protecting Natural Resources**

Volusia County and partner cities, working together on solutions to protect our home and drinking water source, have initiated several projects to improve water quality in the springshed. These include:

- Upgrading and expanding capacity at the Southwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility, which is designed to reduce pollutants in Blue Spring
- Increasing sewer lines in areas that most impact water quality in the Blue Spring springshed
- Advocating to government agencies to secure funding to help pay for costs of sewer line infrastructure

Along with humans, manatees and other marine life depend on clean water in Blue Spring. You can get the facts about nutrient pollution at **GreenVolusia.org**.

Sick and injured sea turtles being treated at the **Marine Science Center (MSC)** in Ponce Inlet will benefit from two grants totaling \$20,441 from the Sea Turtle Grants

Program, which is funded by the sale of sea turtle specialty license plates. The funds were used to purchase a blood analyzer that provides rapid results, along with camera equipment and interactive displays for visitors.

As the only permitted sea turtle rehabilitators in Volusia County, the MSC plays an important role in preserving the health of sea turtles in Central Florida. Since opening in 2002, the center has cared for more than 25,000 sea turtles. Meanwhile, the MSC's bird department continues to average more than 1,100 bird intakes annually. The count for 2020 was 1,228 birds consisting of 127 different species, bringing the number of birds admitted since 2005 to more than 18,000. And the MSC's education department created a virtual studio in 2020 to provide educational lessons to the public during the pandemic. Since April 2020, the programs have been viewed more than 1 million times on Volusia County's Community Information Facebook page and have helped the MSC to gain more than 6,000 new followers.

# **PROUD SPONSOR**Volusia County State of the County Address



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### 34









# **A Thriving Community**

Economic development, transportation, local events and a sense of connection and belonging are some of the things that make communities thrive. They're all building blocks to a better and more resilient future. Through major upgrades at Daytona Beach International Airport, the ongoing work to expand the aerospace industry's footprint in Volusia County and the impact of the **Ocean Center**, our community's building blocks remain strong and robust.

2020 was a year like no other. The pandemic impacted many business and industries, including convention centers. But, the Ocean Center found creative uses for its space in the past year. The facility served as Volusia County Emergency Management's warehouse and distribution site for personal protective equipment. Space was also provided to local agencies for collection and packing of food and other necessities for distribution to the public as part of the county's COVID-19 relief efforts. The facility implemented safety protocols so that events could resume safely. Measures included the mandatory wearing of face masks for both employees and guests, enhanced sanitation, and social distancing protocols. The Ocean Center also worked with each event to implement additional safety measures at the request of the client. While the pandemic created challenges for all professions, including event service, the Ocean Center team embraced the opportunity to think outside the box and work with clients to ensure success and show why the Ocean Center is a premier event venue.

With a reduced event load due to the pandemic, it became a good time to focus on capital projects at the Ocean Center. During 2020, the year saw the completion of the arena elevators modernization project and the start of three additional new capital projects – phase I of the parking garage decking refurbishment, facility-wide sound system replacement and replacement of the arena roof. Design for new **LED lighting systems** for both the Ocean Center and the parking garage were completed in 2020, with the project expected to get under way early this year.

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Despite a global pandemic, Daytona Beach International Airport (DAB) continued to provide the public with essential transportation services in 2020. The airport has taken great measures to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the traveling public by initiating its Ready to Fly initiative. This included enhanced cleaning of the terminal, installing Plexiglas shields at all customer service counters, adding additional hand sanitizer stations, installing social distancing markers and providing public messaging on monitors and announcements. In July, the airport began distributing DAB Cares Kits to departing passengers. The kits come with a DAB branded face covering, a bottle of hand sanitizer, a luggage tag, mints and a thank you card. The DAB Cares Kits are just a small way to help passengers feel more at ease as they return to air travel. And, there is plenty of room to spread out at DAB and avoid crowds that come with bigger airports.

While passenger traffic has decreased considerably at DAB and airports around the world, since May, DAB saw passenger traffic increases that were better than the national average. In fact, DAB was number one in Florida for most aircraft operations (landings and takeoffs) in August, September and October, which was primarily due to the ongoing training operations from Embry-Riddle and our other flight training schools.

Airlines were forced to reduce and even eliminate service at airports across the country. While flights were reduced here, the airlines gradually began increasing flights.

A major win for our community was the announcement in September by American Airlines that it was adding daily nonstop flights to/from DAB to Dallas/Fort Worth, and to/from DAB to Philadelphia. These two new flights provide a more convenient way to travel from the greater Daytona Beach area and even other parts of Central Florida by not having to drive more than an hour to the next closest airport.

Daytona Beach International Airport had solid financial reserves going into the pandemic. The airport also received \$21 million in CARES Act funds, which means the airport can operate safely despite reduced revenues. Thankfully, the airport remains in a good position to attract new airlines.



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In October, the County Council approved the airport to provide financial accommodations to passenger-reliant tenants that are financially suffering from the travel industry's economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The accommodations allocate CARES Act funds by offsetting revenue for the tenants that are being drastically affected by the decline in passenger traffic. Those accommodations could apply to new or current airlines that start new service at DAB. The year ended on more positive notes, with completion of the \$40 million taxiway rehabilitation project (90% funded by the FAA, with the airport and Florida Department of Transportation splitting the remaining 10%) and the new cellphone waiting/observation area as well as continued progress on the \$14 million terminal renovation.

The **terminal renovation project** is on track for completion in the spring of 2021. The renovation not only provides an upgraded look (the terminal hadn't been updated since it was built in 1992), but upgraded experience with passenger amenities like new comfortable seating and power outlets in the seats. The terminal renovation project also included renovation of the airport's two meeting rooms. The Dennis McGee Room and Airline Room can be reserved for community events, and catering services are also available. Additionally, the business center was renovated, and a new mother's room was added. Both of these areas are in the concourse, conveniently located to the gates. And, through a partnership with Volusia County Public Library, visitors and residents now have access to nearly one million eBook, eAudio, comic, movie, music, television or magazine titles for free that they can enjoy at the airport, on the plane or in the hotel.

In the ongoing quest for more and better-paying jobs, local leaders have worked for years to help expand the aviation and aerospace industry's footprint in Volusia County. With a partnership that includes the likes of Volusia County Economic Development, Team Volusia, The CEO Business Alliance, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Space Florida, local chambers of commerce and elected officials on the local, state and national level, the efforts have already paid off. Companies like Arralis Technologies and Printech Circuit Laboratories are but two of the most recent examples.

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#### **COMING SOON**





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If the efforts continue to bear fruit, actions taken by the Volusia County Council in the past year will almost certainly have been a contributing factor.

In January, the council established a manufacturing site plan that placed a special designation on 435 acres of undeveloped land at the county-owned and operated **Daytona Beach International Airport**. By speeding up the local and state permitting processes, the designation makes the property significantly more attractive to aviation and aerospace firms that might want to set up shop here. Under the plan, a proposed business project that meets the eligibility criteria will be able to go through an expedited process for getting state review and approval. Once approved, the development order will be good for 10 years instead of the customary one year.

Then, in February, the council amended the county's future land use map to include a new commercial space industry opportunity overlay zone. The idea was to use the overlay zone and a dozen related policies that the council also adopted as tools to entice more aerospace businesses to come to Volusia County. Also, the county is now looking for an aviation or aerospace business interested in leasing 55 acres of property at Daytona Beach International Airport for their operations. A critical lure of the property is its airfield access.

Also last year, the county at the direction of the County Council, established a **Volusia Fairgrounds** Local Plan designed to protect the agricultural uses at the Fairgrounds while at the same time improving economic opportunities for adjacent landowners near the I-4 corridor. The plan put in place protective measures to ensure that the Fairgrounds property continues to serve as the focal point of Volusia County's agricultural community. But it also provides for reasonable use of privately-held land in order to avoid future issues as the area surrounding the Fairgrounds is developed.

With job creation one of the county's top priorities, the ongoing economic development efforts will continue and intensify. Because when it comes to Volusia County and the aviation and aerospace industry, the sky truly is the limit!

### **GO BEYOND**

## THE BEACH



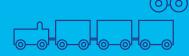
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The 12th annual **Daytona Beach Half Marathon**, presented by Brown and Brown Insurance, took place Feb. 8 and 9, 2020 with all the sun, surf, speed and swag that's made the event a favorite! The kickoff to DAYTONA Speedweeks Presented By AdventHealth, the race featured two 5ks, a half marathon and a half marathon relay, with two challenge opportunities. The event blends running and NASCAR into a unique weekend, with participants earning race-themed items including a finisher medal and ticket to the Clash at DAYTONA and DAYTONA 500 Qualifying.

The 13.1-mile race again offered runners the opportunity to start on the famed Daytona International Speedway and run to the hard-packed sands of the World's Most Famous Beach, before crossing the finish line at ONE DAYTONA to a post-race party complete with food, drinks and awards.

New for 2020, the event partnered with the **Jimmie Johnson Foundation**. This allowed a select group of runners to fundraise for the organization and receive exclusive perks, including a meet and greet with the NASCAR driver.

The 2020 event had more than 1,800 registrants and received rave reviews. As in past years, a beneficiary for the 2020 event was the Marine Science Center located in Ponce Inlet.





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### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Infrastructure is the way we connect with one another. We all use and rely on infrastructure for our health, safety, convenience, recreation and mobility. Investing in it is good for people and good for the economy. Volusia County made significant infrastructure improvements in 2020.

Ease of mobility is essential to our quality of life. And last year saw some major improvements in the way we get from one place to the next. By far the biggest transportation milestone of 2020 was the opening of the award-winning **Tom Staed Veterans Memorial Bridge**. It was years in the making, but the wait sure was worth it! This unique structure was ranked by Road and Bridge magazine as the #3 bridge constructed in the country last year.

The majestic new span, crossing over the picturesque Halifax River to connect East Volusia's mainland with our world-famous barrier island beaches, replaced the old bascule drawbridge that had been there for more than 60 years. The vehicle lanes on the new high-level, multi-arch concrete span opened on Aug. 6, 2020.

The bridge was named for Staed, a prominent area hotelier and Korean War veteran who passed away in 2013. Staed's widow, Barbara Staed, accompanied by her daughter and two grandchildren, led the inaugural group of cars over the bridge on the opening day in a vehicle processional that also included Volusia County Council members past and present as well as representatives from the City of Daytona Beach, local veterans groups, the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Daytona Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Among the dignitaries was former County Council member Josh Wagner, who is credited with helping to get the bridge project started when he served on the council.

About 10 minutes after the last vehicle in the processional completed the trek, the bridge officially opened to the public. The \$48 million project was funded by the federal government, and the bridge extends out along East Orange Avenue on the mainland and Silver Beach Avenue on the beachside. It is the southern most of the multiple bridges that cross over the Intracoastal Waterway in Daytona Beach and is a key transportation link to the county's coastal areas.









### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Designed to recognize the country's military, the bridge features **plaques** at 28 scenic overlooks commemorating conflicts in America's military history. Fundraising is continuing for construction of a memorial plaza at the northwest base of the bridge to honor local veterans and serve as a place of reflection.

And in December 2020, the ribbon was cut on a brand new, state-of-the-art facility where Public Works crews will provide road maintenance and other services to the northeast part of Volusia County. The new **Public Works Northeast Services Facility** replaces an obsolete, flood-prone facility of the past with a structurally secure and centrally located complex to better serve county residents. Serving as the headquarters for the Road and Bridge Division's northeast maintenance operations, and the Traffic Engineering Division's services and signal maintenance operations, the facility offers greater optimization for services and enables staff and equipment to remain on-site and safe during extreme weather events.

The 36,000-square-foot facility is located at the southeast corner of U.S. 92 and Colin Kelly Avenue in Daytona Beach. The campus features five separate buildings, including an operations center, two ancillary road and bridge maintenance buildings, a wash rack and a traffic signal storage building. The \$11.7 million complex was built to withstand hurricane force winds and will support post-emergency response today, and for generations to come.

Three key **road construction projects** got the green light last year – the widening of a half-mile stretch of 10th Street between Myrtle Avenue and U.S. 1 in the New Smyrna Beach/Edgewater area, a 2-mile stretch of Howland Boulevard from Providence Boulevard to Elkcam Boulevard in Deltona and a 1.3-mile stretch of Orange Camp Road from east of Blue Lake Avenue to the I-4 interchange near DeLand.

All combined, the work represents a nearly \$34 million upgrade to Volusia County's road network.







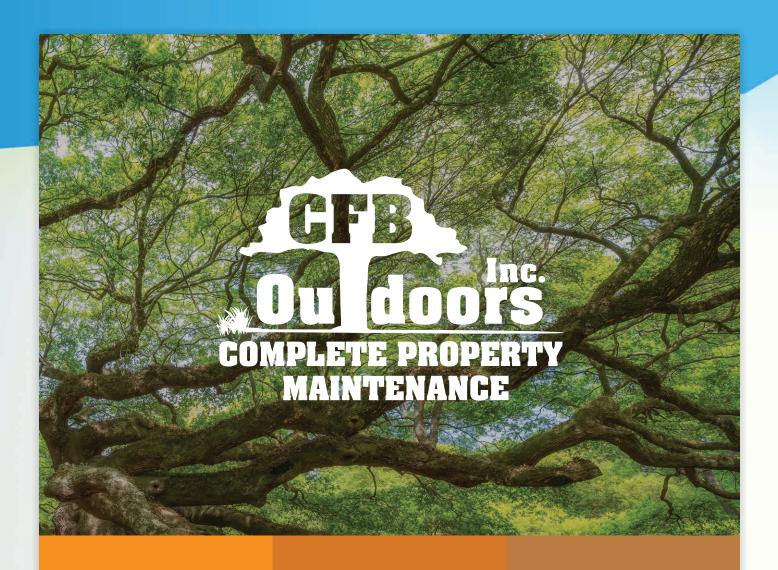


### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Additionally, the county set the stage in 2020 to begin the design and permitting for improvements to three popular **beach ramps** providing vehicle access to the sandy shores of Daytona Beach. While design and permitting are under way now, the improvements are planned in future years for the vehicular beach ramps at International Speedway Boulevard (ISB), the main gateway to the beaches of Daytona Beach, along with the ramps at University Boulevard to the north and Silver Beach Avenue to the south.

The design work for each of the vehicular beach ramps will be rolled out to the public for feedback before final decisions are made on improvements. The Silver Beach approach will go to construction first to get it ready for additional traffic once the Florida Department of Transportation begins work on its project to improve ISB from the Halifax River east to S.R. A1A.

Volusia County's coastline got another dose of good news in 2020 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that it had awarded a \$7 million contract to repair the north jetty and reset the U.S. Coast Guard navigational beacon at the eastern terminous of the **north jetty at Ponce de Leon Inlet**. The inlet is a well-used water thoroughfare connecting the Intracoastal Waterway with the Atlantic Ocean. The north jetty was originally damaged during Hurricane Matthew and has been battered in subsequent tropical events and nor'easters. The repair work will be performed on the water, requiring the transfer of large granite rocks onto a barge for placement on the jetty.



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